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THE

POWER OF ILLUSTRATION

AN ELEMENT OF SUCCESS

IN PREACHING AND TEACHING:

By

JOHN DOWLING, D. D.,

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"You have no *likes* in your sermons. Christ taught that the kingdom of Heaven was *like* to leaven hid in meal—*like* to a grain of mustard, &c. You tell us what things *are*, but never *what they are* LIKE."—*Rev. Robert Hall to a brother minister.*

"I have used similitudes."—*Sacred Scriptures.*

SECOND EDITION.

NEW-YORK:

L. COLBY AND COMPANY,

122 NASSAU STREET.

1850.

BV4226
.D6
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ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1848, by

L. COLBY AND COMPANY,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern District of New-York.

Exchange
Library - Univ. of Western Ontario
June 2, 1936

239662

Printed by PUDNEY & RUSSELL,
No. 79 John street, N. Y.

PREFACE.

The substance of the following brief treatise, was delivered in the form of an address before a literary society, consisting of candidates for the gospel ministry, at the anniversary of the New-Hampton Theological Institution, for the year 1847; and subsequently repeated, with such modifications as the circumstances and occasion required, to the congregation under the pastoral care of the author.

In complying with the numerous requests that have been made to him for its publication, the author has been influenced by the opinion expressed by many, that the subject, though comparatively novel, is one of vast importance, not only to the efficiency and useful-

ness of the Christian minister, but more especially to the Sabbath School teacher, and the Christian parent, who would succeed in adapting the momentous truths of the Gospel to the understandings of their youthful charge. It is hoped also that the interesting illustrations of truth, which have been selected as examples of the principles laid down, will render the work not devoid of interest to readers, who belong to neither of these classes.

Those who listened to the delivery of the discourse in its original form will find some few additional paragraphs, added, in most instances, for the purpose of adapting the work to the faithful and pious teacher as well as to the minister of the gospel. Such as it is, it is commended to the blessing of God, and to the careful attention of the youthful ministry and the Sabbath School teachers of our land, by their affectionate fellow-laborer and servant, for Christ's sake,

THE AUTHOR.

New-York, September 20th, 1847.

PULPIT ILLUSTRATION.

True eloquence was defined by one of the Grecian school of oratory,* as "the power of inventing whatever is persuasive in discourse;" and by another,† as "the power of persuading." Yet both these definitions are defective; and although Cicero seems to copy and indorse the definition of the Grecian orators, when he says, "eloquence is speaking in a manner proper to persuade;" yet this great master of the Latin school of eloquence gives a far more comprehensive and truthful description, when, following the promptings

* Isocrates. † Aristotle.

of his own acute and discriminating intellect, he describes the "perfect orator," as one, "who, in speaking, instructs, delights, and moves the minds of his hearers." — "Optimus est enim orator, qui dicendo animos audientium, et docet, et delectat, et permovet."* The object of eloquence is not solely to persuade, but also to instruct and to convince. And he who would secure an audience to be instructed, convinced, and persuaded, must, where attendance is voluntary, be possessed, in some good degree, of the power, also, to delight, and, consequently, to attract.

While we approve the good sense of the great Roman orator, in making the power of delighting one of the qualifications of

* M. Tullii Ciceronis, De Optimo Genere Oratorum, § 3. Tauchnitz's Edition of Cicero, Vol. II., p. 485.

his "perfect orator," his definition still appears to us to be imperfect. To us it seems manifest that, that orator cannot be a master of the art of eloquence who does not possess, in an eminent degree, the power of convincing by argument, in addition to the power of moving or persuading, by the force of entreaty or appeal. Were we called upon, therefore, to give a popular, and somewhat amplified definition of eloquence, we would say—It is *the art of speaking in such a way, as is best adapted to attract, to instruct, to convince, and to persuade.*—Voice, manner, action, and style, must be cultivated in order to *attract;* the mines of truth must be explored, and their rich treasures must be appropriated, in order to *instruct;* the *rationale* of truth, and the art of reasoning, must be mastered, in order to *convince;* and the wondrous nature of the human mind, the diversified motives of human action, and the hidden springs of

human emotion must be studied, and plied with the force of entreaty and appeal, in order to *persuade.* In briefer phrase, it is the power of pleasing which attracts; it is the *materiel* of truth which instructs; it is the force of argument which convinces; and it is the power of appeal which persuades;—while the faculty of perceiving and applying analogies, or, in other words, the power of illustration, where it is possessed, in a high degree, pervades every department of the orator's art, and contributes attractiveness and beauty, and force, and efficiency to the whole.

There is, perhaps, no single qualification of the orator so well-adapted to attract, to interest, and to instruct an audience, as a happy faculty of illustration; and here, unquestionably, is to be found the reason, why many a man of limited literary attainments, and entirely ignorant of

the sciences of the schools, yet eminently endowed with the faculty of perceiving analogies, with industry enough, by observation and reading, to supply himself with the *materiel* of analogies, and strong common sense in their application, has wielded an influence over the popular mind, and achieved an amount of solid good, far beyond the accomplished scholar and learned divine who may have passed half a lifetime in the halls of learning; but with all his acquisitions, has failed to cultivate the power of illustration.

A conviction, which has long prevailed in my own mind, that in the neglect of this faculty of illustration is to be found the reason why many of the graduates of our higher institutions of learning and theology disappoint the expectations that were formed of them in the earlier part of their career, and enter upon the preacher's of-

fice, only by the soporific influence of abstract dryness and prosy dullness — to convert the house of God into a "sacred dormitory" — is the only apology I shall offer for selecting as the theme of the present discourse,

THE POWER OF ILLUSTRATION CONSIDERED AS AN ELEMENT OF PULPIT SUCCESS.

"If you can't keep awake without," said a preacher to his congregation, "when you feel drowsy, why don't you take a pinch of snuff?" — "I think," was the shrewd, but good-natured reply of one of his hearers, at the close of the service, — "I think the snuff should be put into the sermons." A hint which is well worthy of the attention of those *would-be* intellectual preachers, who affect to undervalue or to despise, not only the power of illustration, but all those innocent arts of pleasing,

both in matter and manner, which may be employed in the delivery of truth in perfect consistency with fidelity thereto. It is altogether a mistake to suppose that a discourse from the pulpit must be acceptable to God, just in proportion as it is distasteful to the people. Let us be understood. We mean by the arts of pleasing, not treason to truth. The preacher must declare "the whole counsel of God," "whether men will hear or forbear;" and that preacher who, in order to render his discourse more palatable to the corrupt and unrenewed heart, or who, for the sake of courting the popular favor, would withhold or dilute an unwelcome truth, *because it is unwelcome*, is a traitor to the cause of Christ, an Esau, who would sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, a Judas, who would betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver. It is not this treason to truth which we mean, by the power of pleasing.

We mean those attractions which consist in the proper cultivation of voice, and manner, and action, and style, and above all, in fertility of illustration. The preacher who would benefit a congregation, must *have* a congregation to benefit; and he who deems it beneath him to employ these justifiable means of rendering his ministrations acceptable and pleasing to his audience, will soon have no audience to please. It will not be long before he enjoys the satisfaction of listening to the echo of his own voice in a deserted house, and of preaching his dull and pointless abstractions to empty pews.

The great advantages resulting from the use of striking and vivid illustrations, are, that they serve (1.) to attract and secure attention; (2.) to afford scope for copiousness and variety, in the exhibition of truths which have long been familiar; (3.) to impress the

memory by their point and force; and (4.) to render complex and difficult subjects easy and plain.

In the present age of the world, originality in the enunciation of absolute truths, and especially those truths which have divine revelation for their basis, and which alone, are the themes peculiarly appropriate to the pulpit, — is hardly to be expected. If originality is now to be found anywhere, it is, not in the truths themselves, but in the almost infinitely diversified modes, that may be adopted by different men, of illustrating those truths. The sources of analogical facts, as we shall presently endeavor to show, are so numerous and so fertile, that every preacher may draw from those sources, without fear of exhausting the supply; thus, by the copiousness and variety imparted to his discourses, investing with, at least, an air of originality, the most trite and familiar themes.

And who does not know, from his own experience, that a truth will remain, long after the lips of the preacher or teacher who uttered it are cold in death; fastened in the memory, "like a nail in a sure place," when it is clinched by a pointed and striking illustration. Nearly thirty years ago, I remember going to hear that remarkable old man, the Rev. Rowland Hill, preach a sermon in the city of London, on behalf of a Bible Society. The text, the subject, and the plan of the discourse, have long since faded from my memory, (for I was but a boy then,) but there was one illustration employed, which I have always remembered, and which, it appears to me, I should never forget, if I should live to the age of Methuselah; and although the comparison was a little below the standard of taste and refinement which I would commend to the preachers of the present day, I will mention it, in proof of

my remark. Mr. Hill had been alluding to the excuses of the Papists for keeping the Bible, as much as possible, from the people, because there were some things in it "hard to be understood." "And what would you think," said the good old man, as he bent forward, leaning one elbow on the pulpit, and putting on his look of peculiar archness, — "what would you think of a father, whose little boy should come to him hungry, and say, 'Father, I want some meat,' and he should reply, though he had a good joint of meat in the cupboard, 'No, my son, I wont give you any meat, *because you can't eat all the bone.*' " — The illustration I quote, not as a model of beauty, but for its pith, point, and *adhesiveness*, for I know not how the idea in the mind of the speaker could have been more forcibly communicated.

But I mentioned as another advantage

of appropriate illustrations, their power to render easy and plain, subjects the most complex and difficult. Suppose, for instance, you are preaching on the important doctrine of justification. You have stated that justification is by, or through the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, and yet, the Apostle Paul asserts in one place, that believers are "justified by faith;"* and in another, that they are "justified "by grace," — "being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."† The inquiry, perhaps, arises in the minds of your hearers, — "If we are justified by the righteousness of God our Saviour, how can we be justified by faith? and if we are justified by faith, how can it be "by grace?" You wish to explain, and to reconcile these *apparently* different statements. In order to do this,

* Romans, v. 1 † Romans, iii. 24.

you employ an illustration. Suppose the following: "You are travelling on a steamboat — the cry is heard, 'a man overboard!' The engine is immediately stopped; the interest and compassion of the passengers and the crew are intensely excited; a rope is thrown to the struggling man; he reaches forth his hand, seizes the rope, and is drawn on board in safety. Now, that man may be said to have been saved *by the rope*, or saved *by the kindness of the passengers and the crew*, or saved *by laying hold of the rope*. The rope is the means, or, (to use for once a scholastic term,) *the formal cause* of his deliverance, the kindness of those on board is the *source*, and his hand laying hold of the rope is *the instrumental cause* thereof. Thus is it," — you may add, after having, by your illustration, prepared the minds of your audience to receive the explanation, — that we are justified by the righteousness of

God our Saviour, the *formal cause* of our justification; or "freely, by grace," the *source* whence this blessing springs; or "by faith," *the instrumental cause* of justification, the hand that reaches forth and receives the inestimable boon. Thus, the difficulty is at once removed; it is immediately perceived by all, that these three apparently diverse propositions, so far from involving a contradiction, are perfectly harmonious and entirely consistent with each other, and a subject, which at first appeared complex and intricate, becomes clear as the light of day.

The utility of appropriate illustrations in rendering difficult subjects easy and plain, is proof sufficient that the subject of the present discourse is equally worthy of the careful study of the instructor of youth, and especially of the faithful Sabbath School teacher, as of the minister of the Gospel.

The power of illustration, while it is an eminently useful qualification to the instructor of men, is absolutely indispensable to the successful instructor of youth.

Sometimes an appropriate comparison serves not only to elucidate a truth by an analogical fact, but also to prove that truth, by an analogical argument. Thus that beautiful illustration of the resurrection, suggested by Butler, in his great master-piece of reasoning, "The Analogy of Revealed Religion," — the transformation of the caterpillar, from a grovelling worm to a chrysalis, encased in its self-constructed tomb, and then bursting its sepulchre, and bounding forth a beautiful butterfly, arrayed in the gorgeous tints of the rainbow, and fluttering in the rays of the morning sun; — this beautiful illustration, I say, becomes a powerful argument from analogy, for the truth of the resurrection

For if such a wonderful change is constantly taking place before our eyes, "why," it may well be asked, "should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?"*

* See Butler's Analogy, Part I, Chap. 1. The author cannot too highly recommend to students the edition of Butler's great work, with Dr. Barnes's Introductory Essay, of which it is high and merited praise to say, that it is worthy of the work which it introduces. The analogical argument in favor of the resurrection, above referred to, is thus beautifully amplified by Barnes:

"That the soul and body should be united again, and constitute a *single* being, is said to be without a parallel in fact in other things, to divest it of its inherent improbability. Now let us suppose for a moment that, endued with our present powers of thought, we had been united to bodies of far feebler frame and much more slender dimensions, than we now inhabit. Suppose that our spirits had been doomed to inhabit the body of a crawling reptile, scarce an inch in length, prone on the

Let it not be supposed then, that because, in the present discourse we shall dwell chiefly on the "Power of Illustra-

earth, and doomed to draw out our little length to obtain locomotion from day to day, and scarce noticeable by the mighty beings above us. Suppose in that lowly condition, as we contemplated the certainty of our speedy dissolution, we should look upon our kindred reptiles, the partners of our cares, and should see their strength gradually waste, their faculties grow dim, their bodies become chill in death. Suppose now it should be revealed to us, that those bodies should undergo a transformation; that at no great distance of time they should start up into new being; that in their narrow graves there should be seen the evidence of returning life; and that these same deformed, prone, and decaying frames, should be clothed with the beauty of gaudy colors, be instinct with life, leave the earth, soar at pleasure in a new element, take their rank in a new order of beings, be divested of all that was offensive and loathsome in their old abode in the eyes of other beings; and be completely dissociated from all the plans,

tion," we are indifferent to the importance of weighty and forcible argument, to prove the truth of those doctrines we preach. No student of Butler's immortal Analogy need to be reminded of a fact, which forms the whole basis of that great work, that truthful and pointed illustrations or analogies, are often themselves the most powerful and convincing of arguments.

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habits, relations and feelings of their former lowly condition. We ask, whether against this supposition there would not lie all the objections, which have ever been alleged against the doctrine of a resurrection and a future state? Yet the world has long been familiar with changes of this character. The changes which animal nature undergoes to produce the gay colors of the butterfly, have as much antecedent improbability as those pertaining to the predicted resurrection, and for aught that we can see, are improbabilities of precisely the same nature."

I hold the power of argument to be a qualification as indispensable to the preacher, as the power of illustration, although the theme I have selected for the present discourse will lead me to dwell, almost exclusively, upon the latter. In calling attention to the immediate discussion of this theme, I shall adopt the following arrangement:

I. Explain *the science of illustration*, and specify the principal classes of analogies which it employs, with examples of the use of each.

II. Explain what is meant by *the power of illustration*, and give some directions for its successful cultivation and improvement.

In treating this important subject, I must be allowed to speak as a practical man. I have selected a subject, upon which com-

paratively but little, (in my estimation, far too little,) is said in the works, which it has been my lot to examine, on Homiletics, Rhetoric, or Eloquence. And often has it been to me a matter of surprise, that, in the text-books on these subjects, hundreds of pages are sometimes occupied with instructions, relative to voice and manner, and action; or to argument, and method, and style; — while the subject of illustration, if alluded to at all, is frequently dismissed with barely a passing remark. I know not how to account for the fact, unless it be that the writers of these works are sometimes men who have confined themselves too exclusively to the cloister or the college; and whose literary and professional habits have precluded that practical acquaintance with pastoral pulpit labors, which would seem to be, at least desirable, to the successful instructor in pastoral duties. In the remarks which I

shall offer upon the importance of pulpit illustration, I shall be guided, therefore, not by opinions expressed in books, but by the common sense observation of one who claims to be a plain and practical man, in the course of a not inactive ministry of some twenty years. But, to proceed to the first division of our subject: —

I. The word *illustrate*, from the Latin *illustrare*, in its ordinary acceptation, signifies *to make clear or manifest, to clear from darkness or obscurity.* In the present discourse I employ the word in the sense in which it is generally understood, when applied to the illustration of public discourses, viz. — *to make clear or manifest by analogies, comparisons, or examples;* whether they be metaphors, similes, parables, illustrative examples, or historic allusions.

(1.) The nature of the *metaphor* or

implied comparison, and the *simile* or formal comparison, and the distinction between the former and the latter, I may safely presume are perfectly familiar to all who have given the slightest attention to the study of rhetoric, or are interested in the subject of the present discourse. — Description is, therefore, here unnecessary. An example or two will suffice. Both these kinds of illustrations are extensively used by the inspired writers. When the Psalmist says, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower,"* he illustrates the protection of the Almighty towards his people by the use of the metaphor; for the comparison is *implied.* When he says — "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people,"† he illustrates the same

* Psalm xviii. 2. † Psalm cxxv. 2.

idea by the simile; for here the comparison is *expressed.*

The distinction between the two will be sufficiently understood by one additional example. In a recent lecture by the Hon. Horace Mann, when warning his auditors against the ruinous consequences of the inculcation of false principles in the mind of the young, the lecturer employed the following forcible metaphor — "If we permit the vulture's eggs to be incubated and hatched, it will be too late to take care of the lambs." The comparison here, though sufficiently obvious, is only implied, and therefore, it belongs to the class of *metaphor.* If put in the form of the *simile,* it would stand as follows, though for terseness and force, this is an instance where the metaphor is preferable. "As the ravenous vulture to the lambs of the flock, so are false principles to the minds of youth. As

it would be too late to take care of the lambs after the vulture's eggs are incubated and hatched, so it will be too late to take care of the youth, when the seeds of error, implanted in their minds, have germinated."

In the following example of the simile, penned by a ministerial acquaintance when suffering under the pressure of domestic bereavement and sorrow, one scarcely knows which to admire most — the tenderness and depth of the piety which the sentiment exhibits, or the delicacy and beauty of the illustration which is employed — "I feel that repeated afflictions come, not as lightnings on the scathed tree, blasting it yet more, but as the strokes of the sculptor on the marble block, forming it into the image of life and loveliness. Let but the divine presence be felt, and no lot is hard. Let me but see his hand, and no event is unwelcome."

Permit me to add one example more of the simile, from an evangelical German divine,* as a specimen of the rich and gorgeous illustrations frequently employed by that poetic and imaginative people. "It has been said by some one," remarks this fervid and glowing preacher, "suppose the sun in the heavens, which enlightens and warms and fructifies everything, were a rational being, which could see everything which it affects; — it would then behold its own image in every sea, in every river, in every lake, and in every brook; — nay, it would even see itself reflected on the loftiest mountains of ice; — and would it not, in the abundance of its joy at such glorious radiance — forgetting itself — embrace all these oceans, seas, and rivers — nay, the very glaciers in its arms, and delight over them? Thus Jesus Christ, the

* F. W. Krummacher, D. D.

Sun of Righteousness, beholds his image and divine work in every renewed soul as in a polished mirror. Thus our eternal Father beholds in his children the beauty of his Son, Jesus Christ, with a complacency, which is more than we are able to express. He embraces them with the arms of his love; and he loves the image of himself in which he has renewed them."

Some preachers have a delightful faculty of illustrating truth, whether in the pulpit, or in pastoral labors, by means of happy and appropriate *suppositions*, employed by way of simile or comparison. The late eloquent and heavenly-minded Dr. Payson possessed this faculty in an eminent degree, and often used it with the most delightful results in his faithful and affectionate ministrations. Those who are familiar with the history and writings of this holy man, will immediately call to mind a variety of in-

stances. One or two specimens will suffice for our present purpose. "Suppose," says Dr. Payson, "you wished to separate a quantity of brass and steel filings, mixed together in one vessel; — how would you effect this separation? Apply a loadstone, and immediately every particle of iron will attach itself to it, while the brass filings remain behind. Thus, if we see a company of true and false professors of religion, we may not be able to distinguish between them; but let Christ come among them, and all his sincere followers will be attracted towards him, as the steel is drawn to the magnet, while those who have none of his spirit will remain at a distance." Is it possible, I ask, to conceive of any other form or figure of speech by which the exact idea in the mind of the speaker could have been more accurately or more forcibly conveyed to the mind of the hearer? If the object of true eloquence be, as has

sometimes been said, "The imparting to others the emotions with which we ourselves are agitated,"* then certainly, comparisons like the above must be a powerful aid to the orator, in the performance of his task.

Nor was Dr. Payson less happy in the chamber of sickness, or the dwellings of sorrow, in the employment of these illustrations for the solace of the disconsolate or the bereaved. "Suppose," said he, on one occasion to a Christian sufferer, who was almost in despair, because the influence of her bodily agonies so distracted her mind, as to prevent her from concentrating her thoughts on the Saviour as she wished, "suppose you were to see a little sick child lying in its mother's lap, with its faculties impaired by its sufferings, so that it was generally in a troubled sleep; but

* Biblical Repository, Vol. VII. Second Series, p. 80.

now and then it just opens its eyes a little, and gets a glimpse of its mother's face, so as to be recalled to the recollection that it is in its mother's arms; and suppose that always, at such a time, it should smile faintly with evident pleasure to find where it was. Should you doubt whether that child loved its mother or not?" The application of the comparison, though not expressed, was easily made by the afflicted sufferer, and we are not surprized to hear that her doubts and despondency were gone in a moment. Equally happy was he on another occasion — so painfully familiar to every sympathizing pastor — a visit to a weeping Rachel, refusing to be comforted for the loss of a beloved child. "Suppose, now," said he, "some one was making a beautiful crown for you to wear, and that you knew it was for you, and that you were to receive it and wear it as soon as it should be done. Now, if

the maker of it were to come, and, in order to make the crown more beautiful and splendid, were to take some of *your jewels* to put into it, — should you be sorrowful and unhappy, because they were taken away for a little while, when you knew they were gone to make up *your crown?*" The mother smiled through her tears at the thought that her jewel was taken from her *but for a season*, and said, in meek submission, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord."

Happy, thrice happy, will it be for that preacher who shall be able to combine, as well in the pulpit, as in the parlor and the chamber of sorrow, the seraphic piety, the Christ-like tenderness, and the vivid power of illustration of the sainted Payson!

(2.) Leaving the consideration of the

metaphor and simile, let us now proceed to the *parabolic* form of illustration.

The word *parable* is derived from the Greek word παραβαλλειν, *to cast, or place side by side, to compare;* and is defined by Bishop Lowth, (though not, in our opinion, with perfect exactness,) to be "that kind of allegory, which consists of a continued narration of a fictitious event, applied by the way of simile, to the illustration of some important truth." It would be foreign from our present purpose to name the various senses in which the Hebrew word *mashal,* or the Greek word παραβολη is employed in the sacred Scriptures, as, when it is said of Job or of Balaam, "he took up his *parable;* or by the sweet singer of Israel, "I will open my mouth in a *parable*, I will utter dark sayings of old;" or by the inspired author of the epistle to the Hebrews, in describing the faith of Abraham

in offering up Isaac — "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him *in a figure;*" or, as it is in the Greek, ἐν παραβολῇ, in a *parable.**

In these, and many other instances, the word is not used in its proper and primary, but in a secondary sense. The definition of Lowth was not intended to include all the significations of the word in the original Scriptures, but only that sense in which it is chiefly used by the four evangelists in relating the parables of our Lord. A parable is more complex than a simple comparison, an allegory more so than a parable. To refer, for example, to the immortal work of John Bunyan — the illustration of sin by a burden, or of despondency by a slough, or of death by a

* Hebrews, xi. 19.—Greek.

river, is an instance of the comparison; the lessons taught to Christian in the house of the interpreter are instances of the parable; the "Pilgrim's Progress" is an instance of the allegory. The first may constantly be employed to illustrate, by its simplicity and point, the themes of the pulpit; the second sometimes in the pulpit, but more frequently in the familiarity of pastoral intercourse; the third, though deeply interesting, and eminently instructive, when managed with ingenuity and skill, is yet too complex and protracted, except for the printed page.

The earliest instance of the parable upon record, and one of the most beautiful in the Old Testament, is that of the bramble reigning over the trees, — employed by Jotham to rebuke the ingratitude, and to exhibit the folly and the danger of the Israelites in choosing as king, Jerubbaal, the murderer of his 70 brethren. "The trees

went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive-tree, reign thou over us; but the olive-tree said unto them, should I leave my fatness and go to be promoted over the trees?" — A similar request and with similar results, is made to the fig-tree and to the vine. "Then said all the trees unto the bramble, — come thou and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, if in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon."*

And how admirably adapted to its purpose was that beautiful and pathetic parable employed by Nathan, in order to bring the royal sinner to repentance for his heinous transgression. How intently does king

* Judges, ix. 7 — 15.

David listen to the touching recital of the man of God, as he describes the abounding wealth of the rich oppressor, with his "exceeding many flocks and herds" — the penury of the poor man, possessed of "nothing, save a little ewe-lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and which grew up together with him, and his children; which did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter." How instantaneously is the anger of the royal listener excited against the heartless plunderer of the poor man's lamb, as, fired with indignation, he oversteps even the limits of justice, and pronounces upon the rich and barbarous oppressor the sentence of death. "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die." And how sincere was that self-condemnation, penitence, and contrition, which resulted from the pointed and cutting appli-

cation of the parable. "THOU ART THE MAN!"*

The great utility of the parabolic form of conveying instruction and reproof, as may be seen by the above instances, is (1.) that an interest in the listener is awakened, and attention secured; (2.) an attractive narrative is substituted for a long chain of argument; (3.) the hearer becomes a judge in his own case, before he is aware of the design of the narration; and (4.) his reason and conscience are often compelled to pass sentence upon himself, before self-love has aroused itself to place him on his guard.

With what inimitable beauty and skill

* 2 Sam., xii. 1—7. The effect of Nathan's reproof may be seen in that touching confession and prayer of a broken and contrite heart, the 51st Psalm.

does "the Great Teacher," who "spake as never man spake," employ this mode of enlightening the ignorance, rebuking the ingratitude, or condemning the obduracy of his hearers. True, the result was not always to produce the contrition and the penitence of a David; for sometimes, when the reason was convinced, and the conscience was compelled to make the application, the pride and obduracy of the heart were still unsubdued. Thus did it happen, that after our blessed Lord had exposed the madness and the cruelty of the Jews, and foretold their approaching fate, in the parable of the vineyard and the husbandmen, who destroyed, first the servants, and then the "beloved son" of their Lord; — that his auditors were compelled to self-application, and perceived the justice and felt the severity of the reproof, while they still hated the reprover. For "the chief priests and the scribes the same

hour," says the evangelist, "sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people; for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them."*

The richness and beauty, the instructiveness and variety of our Saviour's parables, is a theme too copious even to touch upon in the present discourse. It is sufficient to say, that they constitute a complete and invaluable model for the study and imitation of all whose duty it is to teach and to preach the truths of that gospel which Christ himself proclaimed, in such a way that the multitudes "hung upon"† his lips, and "the common people heard him gladly."‡ And it is certainly,

* Luke, xx. 19. Compare Mark, xii. 1—12.

† Luke, xix. 48. "All the people *were very attentive* to hear him. Greek, ἐξεκρέμαρο—from Εκκρεμαμαι—*to hang upon*, i. e. his lips.

‡ Mark, xii. 37.

a sufficient reply to those who affect to undervalue or to despise the illustrative mode of preaching or of teaching, that of all the public instructions of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only perfect preacher that ever lived, a very large proportion, probably more than one-half of all that are recorded, were delivered in the form of comparison or parable.

Why is it, I have often thought, that some men of education and study, seem almost entirely to neglect, if not to despise a mode of teaching, so constantly adopted in the instructions, and so eminently sanctioned by the example of Christ himself, that divine master, from whom they profess to hold their commission to preach, and who has said, "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you?" — Why is it that some of our young men, fresh from the University or the Theolo-

gical Institution, with the ink of their diplomas scarcely dry, imagining that because they have completed a course of study, they must now be, of necessity, profoundly intellectual, and wondrous wise, look down, with ill-disguised contempt, upon men, vastly their superiors in all that constitutes ministerial efficiency, and affect to exclude them from *their circle* of intellectual preachers; simply because, — avoiding the abstract and the dry — they aim, like their master, Jesus, to adapt their discourses to the comprehension of all, by familiar and appropriate illustrations, drawn from the common affairs of every day life? Let me be understood. I do not mean to assert that it is, by any means, a frequent failing among *really intellectual* men, thus to despise the faculty of illustrating truth by familiar and well-chosen analogies. It is generally the sciolist, the *would-be intellectual*, the man who has not yet shaken off,

by contact with men as they are in this every-day world, the starch and the stiffness of college-halls, who, from his imaginary height among the stars, thus looks down upon those homespun preachers, who dwell among men, and deal in the things of real life, and who dare to eschew scholastic distinctions, and metaphysical subtleties, at the fearful risk of being punished for their temerity, by the charge, hurled at their heads by these self-same intellectuals, of "catering for the popular taste."

Well, let these scholastic gentlemen, till experience shall teach them a wiser course, expatiate, to their heart's content, upon their entities and quiddities, their substrata and accidents, their objectives and subjectives, their subjects and predicates. They have chosen a region, above that terrestrial atmosphere, in which common men live, and move, and have their being. They

are soaring among the stars, and they need not wonder, if they are left to soar *alone*. In a few years, if they live so long, they will probably make the discovery that they are "not appreciated," grow weary of their lofty and *lonely* flight, descend again to this terrestrial atmosphere, and instead of scattering the husks of truth among their congregations, learn to crack the nut at home, leave the shells in their study, and feed their people with the kernel.*

* There is much truth in the following eloquent remarks of a gifted pastor in Philadelphia: — "There are numbers, in every section of the land, who have come forth, with rich literary attainments, from the university and the seminary, and who are adepts in the theory of their profession, but yet, when brought into the field of real service, prove utterly wanting in practical dexterity, and are mere nullities in the Church, because of this defect. They are pious and learned; they possess noble gifts, both natural and acquired; and

My young brethren, who are just about buckling on the armor of the gospel ministry, never be ashamed to adopt Christ

in the seclusion of the study they can prepare very excellent and weighty sermons; but they can no more produce them with effect before an audience, than the fabled Vulcan could wield the thunderbolts he had forged. In the distance and chilling reserve with which their spirits are wrapt up, they are as widely separated from the regards and sympathies of the busy, breathing, living world, as the hermit in his remote cell, or the lone astronomer on his mountain-height. They are not working and every-day men; they have not the power of bringing their thoughts and feelings to bear upon others; and the consequence is, that their labors, both in the pulpit, and the more private walks of pastoral life, are unacceptable, uninteresting and feeble. One plain, unlettered preacher, with his warm heart and glowing utterance, his practical habits, and his intuitive perception of human passions and prejudices, will achieve more for the advancement of Zion, than an army of those slow, torpid book-worms, with the starch of

himself, as your model in preaching. You cannot be in better company, than when travelling by his side. You cannot be in better employment, than when listening to his words, and studying his example. You cannot be safer, than when the shaft of criticism or of censure hurled at yourself, must, before it can reach you, light upon the Master whom you serve.

Some of you may, perhaps, be contemplating a missionary field. If this should

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the college yet stiff upon them, with their heads of knowledge and souls of ice, their frigid manners, and their sluggish delivery that lulls like an opiate. It is not by such men that the world is to be roused and shaken. It is not by such men that the crowds of impenitent sinners are to be disturbed in their fatal repose; or the slumbering host of God's elect awakened to glorious deeds, and led on from victory to victory, until the earth alone shall be the limit of its conquests."—*Ministry for the Times. By Rev. G. B. Ide,* page 31.

be so, the exhortation comes to you with redoubled force — take Christ both as the theme and the model of your preaching among the heathen. How, I ask, would that missionary succeed in arresting the attention, and instructing the minds of the heathen, who should slight or neglect to cultivate the power of illustration? Does not the whole history of missions prove, and is not every experienced missionary ready to testify, that the men who have best succeeded in enlightening the minds and benefitting the souls of the heathen, have been those who, in their ministrations, have most closely followed the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the copious use of instructive, appropriate, and familiar analogies? A single example of the kind of parables frequently employed by missionaries in oriental countries, for the purpose of illustrating the truths of the

gospel, may not be considered here out of place.

Says the Rev. C. B. Leupolt, a useful missionary in India, "I one day preached on the general corruption of mankind, and the impossibility of being saved by our own works. A person present expressed his surprise at my assertions, and cried out, 'How can this be true, that *whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all?* How can this be? If I keep six of the commandments, and break four, have I not kept the majority? And is not God in justice bound to give me heaven, because I have kept more than I have broken?'

In explaining these results, says Mr. Leupolt, I could never make the common people understand me without a parable. Instead of entering into an argument, I

have often replied by describing a scene on the Ganges: — 'The day was dismal, the wind roared, the thunder pealed, the lightning was vivid, the waves of the Ganges raged, the stream was swollen, and the current rapid, the infuriated elements threatened destruction to every vessel on its waters; no boat could outlive the storm for any length of time. — But, see, what is that? It is a boat in distress, filled with people, rapidly hurried along by the waves. Between the peals of thunder, the shrieks of the people are heard: they fear the rocks on the shore, to which the current is driving them. Could they but be drawn into this creek, they would be safe. Those on shore look anxiously around, and discover a chain lying near them. A man instantly fastens a stone to the rope, binds the other end to the chain, and flings the stone into the boat. The rope is caught; the people eagerly lay hold on the chain,

while those on shore begin to draw them, amid the raging elements, toward the creek. They already rejoice at the prospect of deliverance; but when they are within a few yards of the land, *one link* of the chain breaks; I do not say *ten* links, but *one* link, in the middle of the chain. What shall these distressed people do now?—Shall they cling to the unbroken links?' 'No! no!' exclaimed one of my hearers; 'overboard with the chain, or it will sink them the sooner.' What then shall they do? 'Cast themselves upon the mercy of God!' exclaimed another. 'True,' I replied; 'if one commandment be broken, it is as though all of them were broken; we cannot be saved by them; we must trust in the mercy of God, and lay hold on the almighty hand of Christ, which is stretched out to save us.'' I have frequently used this parable, says the missionary, and always found it to answer."

There is another class of illustrations, bearing a very close resemblance, if they are not absolutely identical, with those which we have last considered. — I shall term it the illustration by *parabolic facts*, in distinction from *parabolic suppositions*. In the latter, the narrative which forms the basis of the parable is fictitious, in the former it is real. In the one, the events of the narrative are imaginary, in the other they are true. The use of the narrative is, in both cases, precisely the same. In the one case, we illustrate a truth by an analogical fiction, in the other case by an analogical fact. — The definition of Bishop Lowth, it is true, would exclude the analogical fact from the class of *parables*, yet its value would be undiminished, though called by another name; and surely, it must be admitted by all, that a parabolic fact, if equally well-adapted to illustrate a given truth, cannot be less valuable than a para-

bolic fiction. Both are valuable when judi ciously employed; and, in the opinion of many of the ablest biblical scholars, both were used in the parabolic instruction of Christ, and thus sanctioned by his example. What can be more probable than that, that most touching and beautiful of all the parables of our divine instructor, "th Good Samaritan;" besides, perhaps, some others, was the relation of an actual occurrence?

For this reason, I prefer the amended form of Lowth's definition of a parable, given by the compiler of the Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, where he alters the words of Lowth, from "the continued narration of a fictitious event" — to "fictitious or *accommodated* event."* Although

* The words of Lowth, as given by the accurate translator of his Prelections (I have not the ori-

it may be questioned whether it is quite consistent with historical accuracy to attribute the definition thus amended, to Bishop Lowth; yet the addition is sufficient to prove that in the opinion of the estimable and industrious compiler of that useful work, real as well as imaginary events may properly be employed for the purposes of parable; and that analogical facts are as suitable *materiel* for this kind of illustration as analogical suppositions.

The field of illustration thus opened in the class of parabolic or analogical facts,

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ginal Latin of Lowth at hand) are "that kind of allegory which consists in the continued narration of a fictitious event, applied by way of simile to the illustration of some important truth."—See Gregory's Translation of Lowth's Prelections, page 83. The definition is correctly quoted by Thomas Hartwell Horne, in his "Introduction to the Critical Study of the Scriptures," Part II., chap. 2, § 5.

is one of vast extent and almost infinite variety. True, it is liable to abuse, and some have unquestionably erred by a too copious and indiscriminate use of illustrations of this class. Yet it is a legitimate field. Christ himself did not disdain to pluck its flowers. And when judiciously and appropriately used, no class of illustrations will be more likely to rivet the attention, interest the heart, impress the memory, and instruct the understanding of the hearers. Permit me to give one or two examples of this kind of illustration.

Suppose, for instance, it is the design of the preacher to show, that He, who is "the altogether lovely, and the chief among ten thousand," should occupy the chief place in the heart of the believer, and that sometimes objects of earthly delight are removed, because they have drawn the heart from God. How could the idea be more

beautifully illustrated than by the relation of the following fact? "A Spanish artist was once employed to execute a painting of the 'Last Supper.' It was his object to throw all the sublimity of his art into the figure and countenance of the Saviour; but on the table, in the foreground of the picture, he painted some chased cups, so exceedingly beautiful and so skilfully painted, that the attention of all who called to see the picture was at once attracted to the cups, and every one was loud in their praise. The painter observing this, saw that he had failed in his design of directing attention to the principal object in the picture, and exclaiming—'I have made a mistake, for these cups divert the eyes of the spectator from the Master;' he immediately seized his brush, and dashed them from the canvass."

Take another example of this kind of

illustration, which may be used most forcibly to illustrate that passage of Scripture, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." Sir Thomas Thornhill was the person who painted the inside of the cupola of St. Paul's Church, London.—After having finished one of the compartments, he stepped back gradually to see how it would look at a distance. Beneath the scaffolding, and at a depth which caused dizziness, even to contemplate, was the hard stone floor of the building. Gradually receding, with his eye intently fixed on the painting, he had reached the very edge of the scaffolding without being aware of his danger. Another step, and he would have been dashed to pieces on the pavement below! At this instant a spectator perceiving the imminent danger of the artist, and fearing if he called to him he would look behind him, and fall from mere dizziness, suddenly snatched up one of the

brushes and dashed it against the picture. Sir James, transported with indignation, sprang forward to save the remainder of his work from ruin. His rage, however, was soon changed into gratitude, when his deliverer explained the reason of his conduct, and showed him that by marring the painting, he had saved the life of the painter. Thus is it, my brethren, that all men are by nature disposed to regard their own works with admiration; and this admiration would prove their ruin, did not the Holy Spirit, in order to save them from being destroyed by their Pharasaic self-righteousness, show them the worthlessness of all human performances, that they may fly to Christ to be saved by a better righteousness than their own.

Who can fail to perceive tha the truths illustrated by the foregoing incidents, are taught with much greater clearness, and

will be far more likely to be understood and remembered, than if they had been simply enunciated, in the didactic form, without any attempt to deepen the impression by forcible and appropriate illustration? And surely none will affirm that the illustrations employed are any the less valuable, because they are actual occurrences, than they would have been had they consisted of suppositions, invented for the occasion.

3. The *illustrative example*, which is the next kind of illustration, consists in the relation of, or allusion to actual occurrences, for the purpose of warning, encouragement, emulation, or example.

It is different entirely from the parable. The basis of the latter may be either fact or fiction; that of the former must, invariably, be fact. The scope or drift of a

parable is often hidden or obscure, and a mind of but little power of perceiving analogies, might hear or read the narrative which forms the basis of the parable, without at first discovering the design of the narrator. On the contrary, the design of the illustrative example is evident upon the very face of it, and is perceived the instant it is related. The former illustrates that which is abstract and comparatively obscure, by resemblances which are sensible and easy. The latter illustrates a duty by an individual instance of its exercise, or guards against an error or a crime by an individual instance of the consequences of either. In a parable, the thing compared is generally, in its own nature, different from that to which it is compared. Thus, in its own nature, leaven is an entirely different thing from gospel truth, wheat from good men, and tares from bad men. In an illustrative example, the illustration given is

always similar in its nature to the truth illustrated. The thirteenth chapter of Matthew is a collection of parables. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a collection of illustrative examples. When our Lord said — "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field," &c. — he uttered a parable. When he said, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah," — or when, to guard his followers against the danger of looking back, he exclaimed — "Remember Lot's wife," — he cited an illustrative example.

One great source from which the preacher should draw illustrations of this description is the sacred Scriptures; yet he is by no means to be forbidden to seek them anywhere else. The lives of holy

men, in every age, have become the property of the church; and the character and the crimes, the unhappy life and the miserable end of the bad man, in every age, may rightfully be cited by the preacher, as beacon-warnings, to admonish the living that "the end of these things is death."

Does the preacher wish to illustrate the power and the efficacy of prayer? He is at liberty to select his illustration, either from the Bible or elsewhere; he may point either to an Elijah or a Daniel; or to a Luther or a Whitfield. Does he wish to exhibit the good man's desire for the extension of genuine religion, he may cite the example of David, exclaiming — "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen." And then adding, as if every wish of his heart was concentrated in that — "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." Or he may point

to the holy Backus, informed by his physician that he cannot live more than thirty minutes longer, and then saying — "Is it so? then take me out of my bed and place me on my knees: let me spend that half hour in calling upon God for the salvation of the world;" and then, literally, dying upon his knees.

Does the preacher wish to prove that the great and the godly man is ever an humble man? he may point to a Job, "abhorring himself, and repenting in dust and ashes;" or to a Wm. Carey, selecting as the text of his funeral sermon — "Have mercy upon me, O God, according unto thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions."*

* The author heard this fact related, (though not mentioned in the Memoir,) by the Rev. Eustace Carey, the nephew and biographer of Dr. Carey. The remark was made by the venerable mission-

Does he wish to exhibit the power of religion in enabling its possessor to die in

ary during a a dangerous illness, from which he eventually recovered. The inquiry was made — "If this sickness should prove fatal, what passage would you select as the text of your funeral sermon?" When the great and good man replied, "Oh, I feel that such a poor sinful creature as I, is unworthy to have anything said about him; but if a funeral sermon should be preached, let it be from the 51st Psalm, and first verse — 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.'"

The following extract from the last Will of the same eminent missionary, is equally illustrative of the genuine humility of his character. "I direct that my funeral be as plain as possible, and that the following inscription, and nothing more, may be cut out on my grave-stone, viz:

'William Carey, born August 17th, 1761; died ——

'A wretched, poor, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall.'"

peace? He may cite a Jacob, exclaiming, with his dying breath — "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;" or he may point to a Boardman in the jungle, witnessing the baptism of thirty-four of his beloved Karens, and then meekly exclaiming, before he closes his eyes in death — "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Or turning again to the Scriptures, he may point to a Paul, as he gazes upon the grisly king of terrors, and exclaims, — "O grave where is thy victory, O death where is thy sting." Or he may point to a dying Baxter, replying with feeble voice to the question — How are you? — "Almost well." — To a Rutherford, exclaiming — "I feel, I feel, I believe, I joy, I rejoice, I feed on manna! my eyes shall see my Redeemer, and I shall be for ever with him. * * * Christ is mine and I am his! Glory, glory to my Creator and

Redeemer for ever! Glory shines in Immanuel's land! O for arms to embrace him! O for a well-tuned harp!" — Or to a Payson, with a body racked by inconceivable agony, and cheeks pale and sunken with disease — exclaiming, like a warrior returning from the field of triumph, "The battle's fought! the battle's fought! and the victory is *won!* The victory is won for ever! I am going to bathe in an ocean of purity, and benevolence, and happiness to all eternity!"

Or does the preacher wish to illustrate the effect of bereaving providences on the mind of a good man? he may point to the afflicted royal mourner, drying his tears, now his beloved child is gone, and comforting himself with the reflection, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Or he may describe an instance of recent occurrence, such as that which is so touch-

ingly told in the following words of an eye and ear witness: — "About six years ago," says a clergyman of New-York city, "I was travelling on the borders of the Hudson, and on the most beautiful portion of that noble stream, where its waters seem to rest against the highlands of Fishkill, and form the Newburgh Bay. I was riding on the western shore, dotted with elegant country-seats, and so elevated as to command a fine view of the opposite county of Dutchess. Passing a substantial mansion, I observed carriages standing around the entrance, and a hearse, that plainly indicated the occasion of the gathering. It was something more than curiosity, it was the dictate of natural sympathy, that induced me to stop and mingle with the multitude.

It was easy to learn from the first whom I addressed, that a young man, the son of

parents now advanced in life, was to be buried. The clergyman in attendance was just closing his remarks when I stopped at the door; and after a short but eloquent pause in the services, for silence is always eloquent in the house of mourning, the afflicted father rose, and overcoming the emotion with which he struggled, spoke a few words to the friends that surrounded him. Said he, 'A few months ago one of my sons removed to the other side of the river, and resides on the shore in view of the spot where we are assembled. And now I find that my thoughts are over there far more frequently than they were before. I had friends there whom I loved, and I had an interest in the people, but, *I had no son there;* but since that child has been a resident beyond the river, my heart is there often, and loves to be there. So it has been with me during the few days that have passed since this other son cros-

sed the river of death, and, as I trust, has entered into heaven. My thoughts are often there now. True, I had friends there before; a father there; but I had no child. Now I have an interest in heaven, such as I never felt till one of my children went there to live!'"

Sweet and precious thought! May your thoughts, my young ministering brethren, often fly across the river, to contemplate your glorious home above! And may you possess, in an eminent degree, the power of directing the thoughts of the people for whose spiritual good you may labor, thither also!

"And as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To lure her new-fledged offspring to the skies;—
Employ each art, reprove each dull delay,
And point to brighter worlds, and lead the way."

4. The only remaining class of illustrations, to which I deem it necessary briefly

to allude, is the classic or historical allusion. Perhaps, however, it is hardly proper to regard this as a separate class, as these illustrations may generally be referred, either to the comparison, the parable, or the illustrative example. No reader of the eloquent discourses of the Rev. Dr. Williams, can have failed to perceive the frequent and exceedingly happy and beautiful manner in which he brings the results of his extensive reading to bear upon the illustration of his themes, in the form of rich and varied classic and historical allusions.

Permit me to select an example or two from a discourse studded all through with these gems of classic beauty.* The author had been describing the hideous character, and the baneful consequences of a litera-

* The Conservative Principle in our Literature, by William R. Williams, D. D. *Passim.*

ture of passion, when divorced from virtue; a literature which "substitutes as a guide in morals, sentiment for conscience, and makes blind feeling the irresistible fate, whose will none may dispute." Of such a literature he remarks, "It has much of occasional tenderness, and can melt at times into floods of sympathy: but this softness is found strangely blended with a savage violence. Such things often co-exist. As in the case of the French hangman, who in the times of their great revolution was found, fresh from his gory work at the guillotine, sobbing over the Sorrows of Werther, it contrives to ally the sanguinary to the sentimental. It seems at first sight, much such an ill-assorted match as if the family of Mr. Wet-eyes, in one of Bunyan's matchless allegories, were wedded to that of Giant Bloody-man in the other. But it is easily explained. It has been found so in all times when passion has

been made to take the place of reason as the guide of a people, and conscience has been thrust from her throne to be succeeded by sentiment. The luxurious and the cruel, the fierce and the voluptuous, the licentious and the relentless, readily coalesce; and we soon are made to perceive the fitness of the classic fable by which, in the old Greek mythology, Venus was seen knitting her hands with Mars: the goddess of sensuality, allying herself with the god of slaughter."

In another beautiful passage the author had uttered a faithful warning against "the spirit of expediency and of gain," being allowed to pervade the literature and the pulpits of our land, when he exclaims — "No!—gain is not godliness! Man was made for other purposes than to exchange dollars or cents. The fable of Midas pestered with his riches, and unable to eat

because his food turned to gold, is full of beneficial instruction in such times as ours. Man has wants which money cannot supply, and sorrows which lucre cannot heal: although cupidity may teach him often to make expediency or immediate utility the standard of his code of morals."

A single additional instance is all that my limits will permit me to cite, and perhaps all that will be necessary as an example of the historical allusion. It is selected, not merely for its exceeding beauty and richness, but chiefly because of the important lesson it enjoins upon the faithful minister of Christ. "It is one of the traditions of the age of chivalry," says Dr. W., "that a Scottish king, when dying, bequeathed his heart to the most trusted and beloved of his nobles, to be carried to Palestine. Enclosing the precious deposit in a golden case, and suspending it

from his neck, the knight went out with his companions. He found himself, when on his way to Syria, hardly pressed by the Moors of Spain. To animate himself to supernatural efforts, as it were, that he might break through his thronging foes, he snatched the charge entrusted to him from his neck, and flinging it into the midst of his enemies, exclaimed — 'FORTH, HEART OF BRUCE! as thou wast wont, and Douglass will follow thee or die!' And so he perished, in the endeavor to reclaim it from the trampling feet of the infidels, and to force his way out. — Even such will you feel your own position to be, when encountering the hosts of heathenism. Your Master's heart has flung itself in advance of your steps. In the rushing crowds that withstand you, there is not one whom that heart has not cared for and pitied, however hostile and debased, unlovely and vile. It is your business to follow the leadings

of his heart, and to pluck it, as it were, from beneath the feet of those who, in ignorance and enmity, would tread it in the dust."

II. We have thus taken a hasty glance at the principal classes of illustrations, and presented examples of each. It is now time that we proceed to show what we mean by "THE POWER OF ILLUSTRATION," and to give some brief directions for its successful cultivation and improvement.

I know not that I can give a better definition of my meaning than in the words of the Rev. Dr. Bacon of New-Haven, found in a passing remark on this subject, in an able discourse on "the causes and corruption of Pulpit Eloquence." — "The power of illustration," says he, "is nothing else than the ready perception of analogies, with an abundant store of various

and familiar information. In other words, the ready perception of analogies, and the possession of analogies to be perceived."*

In order that the power of illustration may be possessed in a high degree, I would remark, five things are necessary. They are (1.) a habit of observation; (2.) extensive and varied reading; (3.) a retentive memory, to be used as a store-house for the facts collected by observation and reading; (4.) a thorough acquaintance with the truths to be illustrated; and (5.) a readiness in perceiving analogies, that the facts collected may be applied to the illustration of the truths to be taught.

Where all these qualifications unite in the same individual, if he have ready utterance, good common sense, and genuine

* Biblical Repository, Vol. I, Second Series, p. 35.

piety, he can hardly fail to make a useful, interesting and successful instructor, whether in the sacred desk, in the Sabbath School, or in the professor's chair.

The possession of one or two of them will not suffice. If he have the first and second without the third, his mind will be like a sieve, he may rapidly gain ideas, but they will be no sooner acquired than lost. If he have the first three, without the last, his mind may become like a vast storehouse crowded with useful commodities, but utterly valueless to him, because ignorant of their use, and unable, therefore, to turn them to any good account. If he possess all the rest, without the fourth, he will be in danger of indulging in false analogies and puerile fancies, of turning the plainest historical facts in the Bible into imaginary typical and emblematical arguments in favor of whatever crude fan-

cy may take possession of his brain; like an English Antinomian preacher who, in conversation with myself, pitied my spiritual blindness, because I could not see, in the two stones of the brook with which David killed Goliath, the *law* and the *gospel*, with which Christ shall destroy the devil; or like another of the same class, of whom I have heard, who extracted a proof of the final perseverance of the saints, from Christ's riding an ass into Jerusalem.*

* "My brethren," said this pulpit prodigy — "my brethren, you are all asses, and Christ is riding you into the New-Jerusalem, and in spite of all your kicking and plunging, he'll bring you safely there." I presume the reader will agree with me, that there was truth in the first six words of this singular address, at least. Few will deny that the audience were entitled to the interesting appellation applied to them, for listening to such preaching.

A thorough knowledge of the truths to be illustrated, a deep and familiar acquaintance with the doctrines and duties of Christianity, in their mutual dependence, and beautiful harmony with each other, combined with good common sense, will furnish a sufficient corrective against that absolute prostitution of the power of illustration exhibited in the above and similar ludicrous instances. The qualities essential to eminence in the power of illustration will, perhaps, be best understood by one or two successful examples of its exercise.

Does Jeremy Taylor, that Chrysostom of the English pulpit, seek for an illustration to exhibit the connection that ever exists between genuine humility and exalted piety — between a lowly mind and a heavenly mind? — His habit of observation has led him to notice that the English sky-lark builds her nest on the ground, lowlier than all

the feathered tribe, and yet that she soars the highest, filling the morning air with her sweet and cheerful notes. His memory has treasured up this fact, and his ready perception has suggested to his mind the application of the analogy, thus producing that beautiful comparison which has been so happily versified by Montgomery:

"The bird that soars on highest wing,
Builds on the ground her lowly nest;
And she that doth most sweetly sing,
Sings in the shade when all things rest;
In lark and nightingale we see
What honor hath HUMILITY.

The saint that wears heaven's brightest crown
In deepest adoration bends;
The weight of glory bows him down,
Then most, when most his soul ascends.
Nearest the throne itself must be
The footstool of HUMILITY."

But Jeremy Taylor observes yet further. He sees the little bird, perchance on some stormy morning, beating against the wind in its upward flight, and compelled to return, and to rest, panting on the ground, till it can recover strength for the renewal of its flight; and again his fertile and poetic mind perceives another beautiful analogy. The little bird is now the good man's spirit, struggling to ascend toward the throne of mercy, yet impeded in its heaven-ward flight by the unhallowed tempest of earthly corruption, and able to renew its flight and soar aloft, only when passion and pride are conquered. — "For so have I seen," says he, "a lark, rising from its bed of grass, and soar upwards, singing as it rises, and hoping to get to heaven, and climbing above the clouds; but the poor bird was driven back by the loud sighing of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, de-

scending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the vibration and frequent weighing of its wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as though it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed through the air, about his ministry here below."*

How many persons might have seen the lark rising from her lowly nest on her morning flight, beheld her struggles as she breasted the east wind, or heard her sweet notes as she soared aloft, whose habits of observation would have been too small, or whose perception of analogies too obtuse to gather from the feathered instructor any lesson which might illustrate the experi-

* Jeremy Taylor's Sermons. Sermon on Prayer.

ence or the conflicts of the Christian pilgrim on his journey to the skies.

Thus, too, a hundred persons might see the owl, taking a stealthy flight "athwart the noon," without gathering any lesson of instruction, or perceiving in the mid-day sail of the bird of night, any significant illustration or analogy; but a mind like that of Coleridge, perceives in it an emblem of atheism, "willingly ignorant" and wilfully blind; and clothes his perception in the drapery of grand and beautiful poetry:

"Forth from his dark and murky hiding-place,
(Portentous sight) — the owlet Atheism,
Sailing on obscene wings athwart the noon,
Drops his blue-fringed lids, and holds them close,
And hooting at the glorious Sun in Heaven,
Cries out — 'WHERE IS IT?'"

Thus may one person witness or read the singular fact, that the ostrich, when closely pressed by the hunter, will thrust his head into the cleft of a rock, or the hollow of a tree, foolishly imagining that because he can no longer see his pursuer, the hunter can no longer see him; and the curiosity of that person may be awakened and gratified, but he shall gain no second idea; — while another person whose mind has been trained to perceive analogies, and who is watching to pluck the flowers of illustration from every field, shall at once perceive in the silly bird, a striking analogy of "the fool who says in his heart — No God!" wilfully blinds his eyes against the evidence of a coming retribution, and then vainly dreams of safety, till avenging justice overtakes him, and he finds, when it is too late, that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

An idea of the variety and extent of the fields in which this power of illustration may range at will, and of the almost infinite diversity of fruits and flowers which it may cull therefrom, may be formed by a glance at that single field of illustration, from which the last three examples are drawn — the nature and habits of the animal creation. How frequently do the inspired writers draw their tribute of illustration from this fertile source. The "eagle stirring up her nest," or "fluttering over her young," or "bearing them on her wings;" — the lion "greedy of his prey," or "lying in wait secretly," or "walking about, roaring, seeking whom he may devour;" — the bear "robbed of her whelps;" the wolf "catching and scattering the sheep;" the "ox which knoweth his owner, and the ass, his master's crib;" the ant, which "provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest;"

the bird, in whose sight "the net is spread in vain;" the fowls of the air, which "sow not, neither do they reap;" the "hen gathering her chickens under her wings"—these, and a vast variety of similar illustrations, are employed by the sacred writers, or by our blessed Lord himself, to add force, and beauty, and point, to their instructions, expostulations, arguments, and entreaties.

We may form a conception of the almost inexhaustible supply of illustrations to be found in the truths of natural history, from a curious old work, which has lately been reprinted in London, entitled, "Spiritual Honey from Natural Hives, or Meditations and Observations on the Natural History and Habits of Bees, by Samuel Purchas, A. M., London, A. D. 1657." This amusing yet instructive book, though partaking of the quaintness and singularity of the age of

Cromwell, both in its title and style, yet contains much that is valuable, interesting and appropriate, and some of its comparisons are rich with truth and beauty. It will always be found, however, (and I would throw out this remark as a caution to those whom I address,) that when a fertile imagination undertakes to explore and exhaust any single source of illustration, some of his comparisons will be far-fetched and whimsical. This defect may be seen, in some degree, amidst all the piety and fervor, even of "Flavel's Husbandry Spiritualized," and still more, in that singular production of John Bunyan, so vastly below the fame of the great allegorist, "Solomon's Temple Spiritualized."

The "Spiritual Honey from Natural Hives," contains no less than 258 illustrations of different passages of Scripture, all drawn from the nature and habits of a

single species of the insect tribe, and it would be singular indeed, if some of them were not extravagant or whimsical. I refer not to the volume, however, as a model for imitation, but simply as an evidence of the vast diversity of illustrations that may be gathered from a single source. Yet it is not saying too much to assert, that out of the 258 illustrations, more than one-half are pithy, valuable, and instructive. Three or four drops of this "spiritual honey," may serve as a specimen of the hive. Take the following — "Mercy comes naturally from God, like honey from the bee, but justice, like the sting, only when she is provoked." — "If nature teach bees, not only to gather honey out of *sweet* flowers, but out of *bitter*, shall not grace teach us to draw, even out of the bitterest condition, something to better our souls?" "Many hate not sin, nor fly from it, because it is *sin;* but as children do bees;—

not because they are bees, but because they have a *sting*. So do these persons flee from sin, not because it is *sinful*, but because it is *hurtful*."

The only two other instances which I shall cite, are commended to the particular attention of all students of the sacred Scriptures, for the importance of the lessons they inculcate.

"If you do but take and pierce God's word," says our author, "and do but stay upon it, as the bee doth on the flower, and *will not off*, till you have got something out of it; if you still be digging in this mine, this will make you rich in knowledge; and if you be rich in knowledge, it will make you rich in grace." The last I shall quote is the following: — "Some use flowers only for the beauty or the smell; the physicians, for health; the bees,

for honey; so do wise and prudent persons apply their studies for the enriching and feeding their minds." And so, my young brethren in the ministry, permit me to add, will the wise and skillful minister apply his instructions — whether consisting of the statement of truth, or of argument to prove it, or illustration to elucidate it, or entreaty to enforce it — not to gratify the fastidious and perverted taste of those who look with contempt or disdain, even upon truth, unless enshrined in a garland of flowers — not to adapt it to the prejudices of those who have "itching ears," and who "cannot endure sound doctrine;" — but with the single object of "enriching and feeding the minds," and saving the souls of his hearers. Nor can I better explain, than by the concise and forcible comparisons I have last quoted, my own view of the purpose for which the kind of illustration I commend should be employed — not merely

for beauty but utility; not as flowers of rhetoric, but as aids to thought; not simply that they may tickle the ear, or gratify the taste, but that they may add clearness, or force, or point to important practical truths.

If we were to turn to the other fields of illustration explored by the sacred writers, besides that which has been specified, we should find in them all, a copiousness and variety almost equally rich. In the Bible, we find all nature and all history laid under tribute to furnish illustrations of the truth. The sun, the moon, and the stars; — the ocean, "the troubled sea when it cannot rest," and "the waters casting up mire and dirt;" — the winds, the rivers, and the still waters; — the rocks, the hills, the mountains, and the valleys; — the "trees planted by the rivers of water;" — the oaks of Bashan, and the cedars of Lebanon; —

the vine, the olive, the pomegranate, the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley; — the mustard plant, the wheat and the tares; — the process of vegetation, the decomposition or "death"* of the grain of wheat; — the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear; — the occupations of men, the husbandman "waiting for the precious fruits of the earth," the sower "going forth to sow," the shepherd tending his flock, or the refiner purifying his silver and his gold; — buildings, corner-stones, foundation-stones, precious stones, and jewels. The common events of life; — the discovery of a pearl in a field, the finding of a lost coin or a stray sheep, the casting of a net into the sea, the return of a spendthrift son, the compassion of a benevolent traveller, and the ceremonies of a marriage

* 1 Cor., xv., 36, 37.

feast. The events of history, the characters of good men or bad; the virtues they exercised or the vices they exhibited, the influence they exerted, and the rewards or the punishments that resulted from their conduct. All these, besides a multitude of objects and events, which time would fail us to enumerate, formed the *materiel* of the rich and almost exhaustless fund of illustration, found in the inspired records.

The illustrations of the Bible are, of course, to be quoted, and incorporated in all our discourses upon the great truths of the Gospel, and no sermon can be considered as complete, unless its instructions are illustrated, and its positions are confirmed by the authoritative declarations of inspiration. Yet they are to serve, not merely as *mines* from which analogies may be obtained, but as *models* by which analogies may be constructed. All the sources

of illustration explored by the sacred writers, may legitimately be laid under tribute by the preacher of the nineteenth century. More than this; — the great field of illustration which lies open to the preacher of the present age, is even more extensive than in the time when "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," — because augmented, at least, by the history of the church and of the world for the last eighteen centuries, by the advance in science and art, and by the startling and astonishing discoveries of modern times. To give but a single instance, even the last great discovery of this wonderful age has already been laid under tribute to the power of illustration; and we have been told that the almost inconceivable rapidity, with which the electric wires carry their messages, from one extremity of our country to the other, is an emblem — though still an inadequate one — of the

speed with which messages may be conveyed from the heart of the trembling penitent, or from the couch of the suffering saint, to the ear of HIM who has said, "Call upon me in the day of trouble." Yes! precious and consoling thought to the sons and daughters of affliction! prayer flies to its gaol quicker than a message even by the lightning telegraph!

Now, if the sources of illustration are thus varied, and thus prolific, how important to him who would appropriate their treasures, are these five things that I have already named as necessary to all who would possess in a high degree the power of illustration, viz. — habits of observation, extensive and varied reading, a retentive and cultivated memory, a thorough acquaintance with the truths to be illustrated, and a readiness in perceiving analogies.

A few brief directions will conclude the present discourse. Would you acquire, and retain in a high degree, the power of illustration, my young brethren? Then (1.) *cultivate and give free scope to your habits of observation*, and your opportunities of inquiry and research. Keep your eyes and your ears constantly open. Study men and things as you will meet them in the common walks of life. Instead of isolating yourselves from the masses, as is too frequently done by men of study and literature, mingle freely with the people, and while you aim to do them good by a holy example, never be ashamed to ask and receive information, from any who are able to give it. However humble their occupation, and however limited their literary attainments, compared with your own, you will often discover a vein of good common sense and a fund of valuable information on common things, possessed by the farmer,

the mechanic, or the laborer, which cannot be acquired in the halls of learning or of science, and of which you will find it much to your advantage to avail yourself.

(2.) *Give attendance to reading.* Cultivate a familiar acquaintance, next to the sacred Scriptures, with the history of the church in every age, and the lives of the holy men who have been its defenders or its ornaments. Study the secular history, too, of every age and of every nation, and the biography of the men who have become famous, either in ancient or modern times, for their power, their learning, their genius, or their eloquence. Explore, if possible, every field from which sources of illustration can be drawn. Let the starry heavens above you, and the verdant earth beneath you, with its trees and plants and flowers, the air with its winged inhabitants,

the sea with its finny tribes, the land with its beasts and creeping things, all be the subjects of reading, observation, and study, and all contribute their share to the illustration of the momentous themes of the pulpit.

(3.) *Cultivate your power of perceiving analogies.* Acquire the habit of *pulpit-appropriation*, throughout the whole circle of your reading, observation, and study. — Whether you are reading history, or biography, or travels; science, or eloquence or poetry, or any other department of literature, — be constantly on the watch for analogies to illustrate the themes of the pulpit. To a mind ever thus on the watch for illustrations of truth or of duty, no intellectual pursuit will be barren of instruction or profit. All his mental acquisitions will be made to pay their tribute to the pulpit; and even the common occurrences of every

day life, and the common journals of every day news,* will contribute their quota to enrich that treasury of illustration laid up

* As an example of the kind of facts to be gleaned from this source for the purpose of illustration, take the following from a recent Boston paper: — "APPALLING COLLISION AT SEA. — The ship Shanunga, at this port, from Liverpool, reports that on Monday morning, the 9th of August, the weather being foggy, she came in contact with the Swedish bark Iduna, from Hamburg, with two hundred and six persons on board. The Iduna sunk in about half an hour. Immediately after the collision, the Shanunga's boats were put out, and with one boat from the bark, picked up thirty-four persons only. *One hundred and seventy-two persons*, including the master, Capt. Moberg, were lost! — Capt. Patten, of the Shanunga, is wholly incapacitated, from the depth of his feelings, from entering into any details at present, relative to this melancholy event. He says that no statement could exaggerate the horrors of that awful moment. — All the survivors that were saved were picked up from the surface of the water. One cause why

in the storehouse of his memory, to be used as occasion may require; and seldom will a single day be allowed to pass without adding to the stock on hand.

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so few were thus saved, was, that almost all of them had, when the cry went round that she was sinking, *seized their belts of gold and silver, and tied them around their waists:* thus those who attempted to save their gold lost both life and gold, being unable to sustain themselves until the boats could reach them."—What a striking illustration is furnished by the above melancholy incident of the destructive influence of an all-engrossing desire for wealth! As these poor wretches sunk the sooner, and made the death of the body the more certain, by fastening their gold about them, so there are many who seem willing to barter, even their souls, for gold. Alas! how earnestly and how anxiously do they toil and strive after that, which when obtained, instead of ministering to their soul's good, only serves as a dead weight to sink them the sooner and the deeper to perdition! "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

(4.) Finally, I would say, above all, *cultivate a habit of spiritual-mindedness*, and that will turn everything into *pulpit-gold.* Set your affections upon things above. Think much of Christ and of Heaven. Breathe the atmosphere of Gethsemane and of Calvary, and let the eye of faith and of love be habitually fixed on that Saviour who there agonized and died. To borrow the words of another, I would say, "Baptize your souls in Baxter's Saints' Rest" — to which I would add — and in such works as "Flavel's Fountain of Life," or "Owen's Spiritual-mindedness," or his "Person and Glory of Christ," or "Ambrose's Looking to Jesus."

This habit of meditating upon the tender and subduing themes connected with the work of redeeming grace and love, will prepare the mind to pluck the flowers of spiritual instruction and delight from every

field, and will consequently tend pre-eminently to qualify that minister or that teacher, who thus lives "quite on the verge of heaven," to be a successful spiritual instructor to others.

Let it be your aim, therefore, my young brethren, so to live and so to labor, as you would if Christ himself, in a form which your bodily eyes might see, were standing by your side, and fixing on you his eyes of tenderness and love, as he did upon that disciple whom he loved, when leaning on his breast at supper, or when he spoke to him from his cross of agony; or as he did upon Peter who denied him, when that look of mingled tenderness, pity, and reproach, caused the too confident, but now broken-hearted disciple, to "go out and to weep bitterly."

And is it not, in reality, true, that Jesus

still lives? that "He liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore?"* Is it not literally true, ye ministers of Christ, that the eye of that Master whom you serve, is every moment resting its piercing glance upon you, just as really and just as truly as though your bodily eyes could behold him? And is it not for your special encouragement that he assures you of the fact, when he says — "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world?"†

It is related of a certain chief of the MacGregors, a Highland clan, who had warmly espoused the cause of the exiled Stuarts, that when advancing under the banners of Charles Edward, against the English troops at the battle of Preston Pans, in 1715, he was struck to the ground by two balls from the enemy. The Mac-

* Revelation, i. 18. † Matthew, xxviii. 20.

Gregor clan seeing their loved chieftain fall, began to waver, when the wounded captain instantly raised himself upon his elbow, and as the blood streamed from his wounds, exclaimed aloud — "I am not dead, my children! I am looking at you, to see if you do your duty!"* Thus, my young brethren, who are just buckling on the armor of the gospel ministry; — as you go forth to battle with the hosts of darkness, if ever your hearts should falter or your faith give way, if ever your spiritual adversaries should seem to gain a temporary advantage, remember that the MASTER whom you serve, and who is at once your Saviour and your captain — the great "captain of your salvation,"† is not dead, but

* Histoire de Charles Edward, dernier Prince de la maison de Stuart, &c. Par Amédée Pichot. Paris, 1846. N. A. Review for January, 1847.

† Hebrews, ii. 10.

alive, and that from his throne on high *He is looking at you, to see if you do your duty*

May God enable you, by his grace, so to war a good warfare, that when you are called to receive your discharge, be it early or late, each one of you may be enabled to say, with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give unto me at that day!"

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